

28. An imitation cheese composition comprising:

- a) moisture in an amount that is at least 60% by weight of the composition,
- b) an acidulent in a total titrateable amount of less than 1.5% by weight of the composition such that a pH of the composition is not greater than 4.6,
- c) a hydrocolloid, and
- d) cheese flavoring, wherein the cheese flavoring is natural or artificial,

the composition being sufficiently firm such that it can be at least one of sliced, cut, shredded or grated.

29. The composition according to claim 28, further comprising a cheese-derived component.

30. An imitation cheese composition comprising:

- a) moisture,
- b) an acidulent in an amount that causes a pH of the composition to be not greater than 4.6,
- c) a hydrocolloid,
- d) a cheese-derived component in an amount less than about 15% by weight of the composition,
- e) cheese flavoring, wherein the cheese flavoring is natural or artificial, and
- f) cellulose in an amount less than about 10%,

the composition being sufficiently firm such that it can be at least one of sliced, cut, shredded or grated.

31. An imitation cheese composition comprising:

- a) a combination of moisture and whey in an amount that is at least 60% by weight of the composition,
- b) an acidulent in an amount that causes a pH of the composition to be not greater than 4.6,
- c) a hydrocolloid,

- d) a cheese-derived component in an amount less than about 15% by weight of the composition, and

- e) cheese flavoring, wherein the cheese flavoring is natural or artificial,

the composition being sufficiently firm such that it can be at least one of sliced, cut, shredded or grated.

32. A method for preparing an imitation cheese composition, said method comprising:

preparing a composition comprising moisture in an amount greater than about 60% by weight of the composition, a hydrocolloid, a cheese-derived component in an amount less than about 15% by weight of the composition, and cheese flavoring, wherein the cheese flavoring is natural or artificial; and

acidifying the composition to a pH of not greater than 4.6,

wherein the resulting composition is sufficiently firm such that it can be at least one of sliced, cut, shredded or grated.

33. A method for increasing the microbial stability of an imitation cheese, the method comprising the steps of:

- a) preparing a composition comprising moisture in an amount greater than about 60% by weight of the composition, a hydrocolloid in an amount of about 0.01% by weight to about 40% by weight of the composition, a cheese-derived component in an amount of no more than about 15% by weight of the composition, a protein in an amount of no more than about 1% by weight of the composition, and a cheese flavoring; and

- b) acidifying the composition to a pH of not greater than 4.6, such that the imitation cheese has increased microbial stability.

* * * * *